

There were continual outbreaks in South Yorkshire, both at Doncaster and Beverley.¹ On Palm Sunday, 1398, there was a formidable revolt of peasantry in the villages of Oxfordshire.² It was better that rebellion should show its head in an age when so much was wrong, than that all complaint should be stifled. Since Parliament only vented the grievances of the middle class, the labourers needed to make themselves heard by rioting. The government was bad, the social system was decaying, the time was out of joint. A strong expression of discontent was natural and right.

The social demands of the rebels were just and expedient but as a political revolution the rising could only have led to anarchy. There were no means of establishing the political power of the peasants, who cared nothing for Parliamentary institutions, and did not demand extension of the franchise. The government conducted by the upper class was the only government then possible. On the other hand it was a grave misfortune to England that the social concessions made were shamelessly withdrawn.

The Rising was a sign of national energy, it was a sign of independence and self-respect in the mediaeval peasants, from whom three-quarters of our race, of all classes and in every continent, are descended. This independent spirit was not lacking in France in the fourteenth century, but it died out by the end of the Hundred Years' War; stupid resignation then took hold of burghers and peasantry alike, from the days when Machiavelli observed their torpor,³ down to the eve of the Revolution. The *ancien regime* was permitted to grow up. But in England there was a continuous spirit of resistance to tyranny, which secured the early abolition of serfdom, and feudalism. It is no fault of the men who rose in 1381 that this spirit afterwards migrated to the towns, leaving the English agricultural labourer in a state of social freedom far less advanced than that enjoyed by the French peasant since the successful Jacquerie of 1789.

¹ *Anc. Ind.*, P. B. O. no. 116, Yorks.

³ The Oxfordshire rebels made the folio-wing proclamation: 'Arise all men and go -with us, or else truly and by God ye shall be d
Ind. (Anc.

80, Oxon. 21 B. II.). Only the 'd' of this last word is extant in skin 13 of this document, but it appears, from a very similar proclamation on skin 8, that the word is 'dead'.

* See Machiavelli's *State of France*, early sixteenth century.